

VZCZCXRO9016  
RR RUEHDBU RUEHLN RUEHPOD RUEHSK RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHMO #0708/01 0821301  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 231301Z MAR 09 ZDS  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2502  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHXD/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 000708

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ORIGINAL CABLE GARBLED)

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [KIRF](#) [SOCI](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: NEW PATRIARCH SOUNDS PRO-AMERICAN AFTER RETURN OF  
HARVARD BELLS

REF: 06 MOSCOW 12851

MOSCOW 00000708 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Ambassador Beyrle attended a ceremony on March 17 to commemorate the return of 18 bells from Harvard University to the Russian Orthodox Danilovskiy Monastery. Patriarch Kirill shared his appreciation for the U.S. Government's role in the process, proclaiming the ceremony as a new page in Russian-American relations. Kirill met privately with Ambassador Beyrle after the ceremony, reiterating his desire to promote better bilateral relations. End Summary.

#### Bell-Ringing Ceremony Draws Hundreds

-----

¶2. (SBU) On March 17, several hundreds of Russian Orthodox faithful gathered at the headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), Moscow's Danilovskiy Monastery, to witness a ceremonial ringing of the Harvard bells. The eighteen bells, purchased from the Soviet government in 1930 by American businessman Charles Crane for the price of the metal used to cast them, were returned to Danilovskiy Monastery on September 12, 2008, after almost 80 years at Harvard University (reftel). Businessman Viktor Vekselberg, in cooperation with the Moscow City Government and the cultural-historical foundation "Time Connection," financed the return of the original bells, cast at the beginning of the 20th century. President Reagan first approved of their return in 1988 during meetings with the Soviet leadership, and subsequent U.S. and Russian government and religious leaders continued the negotiations over the past 20 years.

#### Kirill Pro-American in His Public Comments

-----

¶3. (SBU) Prior to the bell-ringing ceremony, Kirill gave a two-hour liturgy in Holy Trinity of Danilov Monastery, broadcast to the masses in the courtyard square over loudspeakers. Kirill then strode out to the packed courtyard and spoke to the crowd, praising the return of the bells as opening "a new page in U.S.-Russia relations" and asking for God's blessing so that "in the future, Russia and the U.S. can replenish one another with resources and talents, creating a common successful and just future in which spiritual and material things harmoniously co-exist." The Patriarch generally thanked many for their efforts in facilitating the return of the bells, saluted the "will and heated faith" of all Russians, and called the event "symbolic of the triumph over human injustice," the landmark of a once Godless Soviet Union.

#### Private Meeting with Ambassador

-----

14. (SBU) Following the ceremonial tolling of the bells, Patriarch Kirill led a VIP procession through the crowd to his residence at the monastery for a reception. Hosting over 50 guests, Kirill thanked Vekselberg for his part in returning the bells, and handed certificates of his appreciation to Father Superior of Danilovskiy Monastery Aleksei, the Director of the Russian Federal Customs Service Andrei Belyaninov, and the head of the Civilizations Foundation. Ambassador Beyrle joined Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov and Kirill in a private room for a separate private meeting, during which Kirill reiterated his desire to see the Church help promote better U.S.-Russia relations. Kirill reminded the Ambassador of their conversation at his enthronement February 1, when he said he hoped the ROC could play a useful role in this way, and pointed to his public remarks at the bells ceremony as evidence of his commitment.

15. (SBU) At one point in the conversation, Kirill reminisced about his past, telling the story of a project that he oversaw during his previous service as the Rector of the Leningrad seminary in the 1970s. At that time, he funded the translation of numerous liturgical materials from foreign languages into Russian, paying a small refusenik and foreign dissident community in Leningrad to do the translations before Russian security services discovered his activities. Laughing, Kirill said that the Church subsequently sent him to Smolensk, where he served as Metropolitan for over 20 years.

Comment

-----

16. (SBU) Kirill's renowned charisma, bolstered by an unexpected sly sense of humor, was much in evidence during the private meeting with Beyrle and Luzhkov. More important, though, were the tone and substance of his public remarks

MOSCOW 00000708 002.2 OF 002

(carried widely in Russian media) about the "new page" in U.S.-Russian relations that we hope will resonate with the generally conservative community of Orthodox faithful here who are probably less influenced by similar positive signals being sent by the political leadership. End comment.  
BEYRLE